VIETNAM Courier

A MONTHLY REVIEW PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, FRENCH AND RUSSIAN ★ 9/1988

- *Third Session of the Eighth National Assembly of the SRV: New Resolutions*
- *Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam*
- *For Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia*
- *Vietnam Joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance Ten Years Ago*

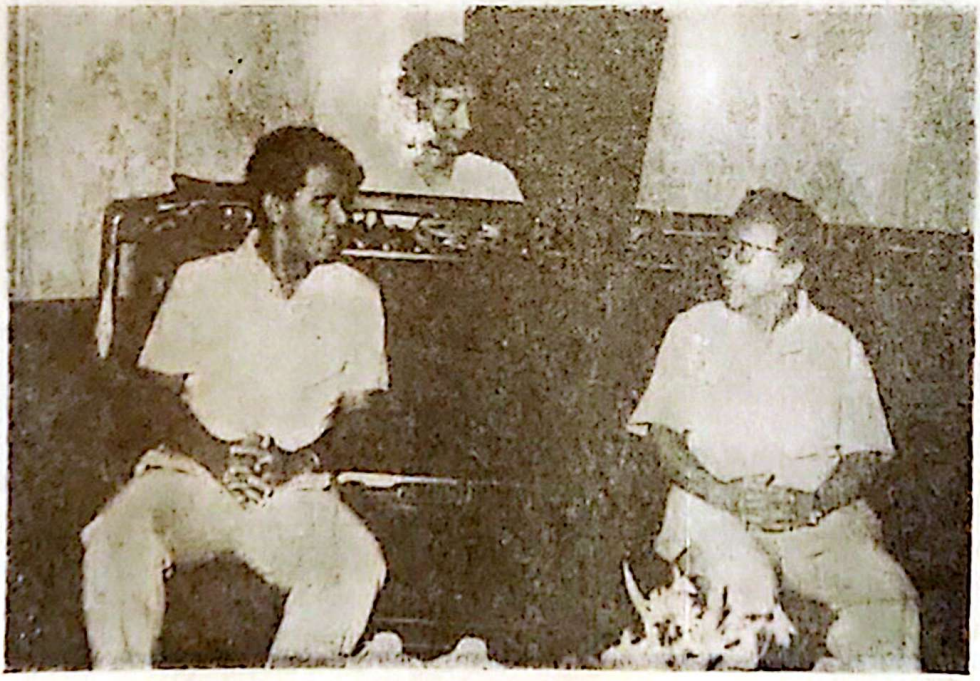
OUR GUESTS

● *The fourth conference of the general directors of news agencies of Laos (KPL), Kampuchea (SPK) and Vietnam (VNA) was held on 17 June 1988. Minutes on cooperation among them and bilateral agreements on professional cooperation for 1988 — 1990 were signed.*

Photo: MINH DIEN

● *The fifth session of the Vietnam-Yugoslavia Inter-Governmental Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation was held in Hanoi on 22 June 1988. Minutes on a trade agreement for 1988 — 1990 and a protocol on goods exchanges for 1988 were signed.*

Photo: KIM HUNG



● *On 2 July 1988, President of the SRV National Assembly Le Quang Dao (right) received Dr. Mohammad Awad Al-Saadi, member of the Central Committee of the Yemeni Socialist Party and of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Council of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, head of the delegation of the Yemeni Socialist Party on a visit to Vietnam.*

Photo: KIM HUNG

VIETNAMESE WOMAN ACCORDIONIST WON FIRST PRIZE AT INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

At the 55th International Accordion Competition sponsored by the UNESCO-affiliated International Organization for Accordion (IOA) held in Paris from 12 to 15 May 1988, a Vietnamese artiste won first prize, the first accordionist from Asian, African and Latin American countries ever to do so. She was Le Thi Ngoc Thanh, born 1960 in Hanoi.

As a little girl, Ngoc Thanh enrolled in the accordion department of the Hanoi Art School. Later, she went on to the Hanoi Conservatoire.

In 1979, she won second prize at an accordion competition in the country. In 1981, she was sent to the Soviet Union for further training. In Moscow she passed the entrance exams to the Gnesin Music Institute with high marks. At the time Ngoc Thanh attended the Paris competition she was only a fifth-year student at the Institute. However, after two selection rounds she was placed first among 23 competitors from various countries, and was unanimously awarded the first prize by an international jury.

VU QUOC HUNG

SHELL AND PETROFINA UNDERTAKE OIL EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION IN VIETNAM

The Law on Foreign Investment promulgated in Vietnam in December 1987 has drawn due attention from foreign companies. Some take a wait-and-see attitude, but others have rapidly decided to invest capital in joint ventures with Vietnamese agencies. In the field of oil and gas exploration and exploitation, the first contract was signed between HIL of India and the Vietnam National Oil and Gas Company (PETROVIETNAM) in early 1988. On 16 June last a second contract was signed between PETROVIETNAM and a consortium formed by Shell exploration B.V. of Holland and PETROFINA S.A. of Belgium.

Under this contract SHELL and PETROFINA will put in 100% capital and face all risks in oil and gas exploration and exploitation on an area of about 12,000 square kilometres in Bon Trung (Hue) on the continental shelf of Central Vietnam. The duration of the contract is 25 years. In the first five years of survey and exploration, SHELL and PETROFINA undertake to spend about 70 million US dollars. If the results are positive, the two companies will put in more investment (funds and technology) for exploitation of the deposits. The profits obtained will be divided between the parties according to international practice and on the basis of mutual advantage.

QUANG THIEU

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Front Cover: Spring music — Zinc etching by TRAN VIET SON

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MANILA, JUNE 1988

SOUTHEAST ASIAN JOURNALISTS' GET – TOGETHER

On the initiative of the American Peace Fund, a get-together of journalists in Southeast Asia was held in Manila from 8 to 11 June 1988.

Present were representatives of influential press publications in Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Philippine Foreign Minister, representatives of the Organisation of International Journalists in the Philippines, the Press Institute and the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry of the Philippines were also present.

The participants briefly spoke about the process of development of the publications, the number of copies printed and their distribution, the training of correspondents, the creation of sources of information and how to use them, and the influence of press publications on public opinion.

They were interested in the renovation of the Vietnamese press after the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, its impact on the process of democratization, on the dissemination of, and the struggle for, the new way of thinking in politics, economics, science, art and culture. Journalists from the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand also wanted to know more about the content and impact of the series of articles signed N.V.L. published in the Vietnamese press.

Current heated regional problems were frankly and openly discussed. The seventh withdrawal of Vietnamese volunteer troops along with their Command from Kampuchea was highly appreciated by the participants who considered it a sign of goodwill on the part of Vietnam.

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PANORAMA ● PANORAMA

The twin brothers before the operation.

Photo: NGOC HAI

SUCCESSFUL SEPARATION OF SIAMESE TWINS

At 1.30 p.m. on 17 May 1988, at the Pediatric Hospital No. 1 in Ho Chi Minh City, following a 4-hour surgical operation. two congenitally united twins; Tran Song and Tran Pha, born on 2 February 1987 in Minh Hai province were separated. They had been joined together in the region of the chest and abdomen.

The operation was performed by a team of 14 surgeons and assistants headed by Dr Tran Thanh Trai, chief surgeon.

After the operation on the abdomen, the individual abdominal cavities of the children were smaller than their former common abdomen and this caused some difficulty in their breathing, but after a further 30-minute operation the children could breathe normally, without the help of the respirator.

Then came the operation for the separation of their livers. The children had separate bile ducts and gall bladders, but their livers were joined together without a furrow at the junction, on an area measuring 6 by 3 centimetres. This mass of tissue was served by three blood vessels 5 millimetres in diameter. The surgeons successfully separated the livers and there were no signs of internal haemorrhage.

By 19 May 1988, the respiratory systems of the two children functioned normally; the sutures on their abdomens were in good condition. Their temperature, blood pressure, pulse and respiration as well as their sensory systems were normal.

THANH LAN

SURGICAL THREAD MADE IN VIETNAM

After six years of research and testing (1981-1987) in cooperation with the Vietnam Textile Institute, Doctors Bui Si Bui and Nguyen Huy Du, and engineer Tran Minh Nga at the Military Medical Institute, succeeded in making suture out of a fibre produced by a variety of silk-worms feeding on mulberry leaves.

At first, by means of band spinning threads of ten sizes (1/0 — 10/0) were obtained. Later, five sizes were spun (1/0-5/0) using Bulgarian-made machines. Checking their diameter, resistance and resilience against American standards (USP), it was found that they were up to standard, as were the 12 micro-elements the silk thread contained..

This silk thread was used experimentally in 33 operations on dogs and rabbits. In 59 sutures made on 33 animals, the results obtained were satisfactory compared with American silk thread.

At Military Hospital 103 and the Ha Nam Ninh polyclinic, this silk thread has been used on 223 patients undergoing 14 different kinds of surgical operations. The percentage of successful suture is 98.65% (220 out of 223 cases). Used in operations on humans the thread leads to no harmful side effects. Its manufacture will help us achieve self-sufficiency in this field.

VU QUOC HUNG

THE THIRD SESSION OF THE EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

President of the National Assembly Le Quang Dao delivering the opening speech.

Photo: KIM HUNG

This ordinary session was held in Hanoi and lasted seven days, from 22 to 28 June 1988.

The whole of the agenda, as adopted at the opening meeting, was attended to. The National Assembly appointed Do Muoi, member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, in replacement of the late Chairman Pham Hung who died early in March this year.

To the Assembly, the new Chairman made this pledge: "Together with the other members of the Council of Ministers, I will abide by the spirit of renewal set forth in the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress and will act upon the ideas expressed by General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh concerning the responsibilities of the Council of Ministers in the implementation of that Resolution and of the resolutions of the Party Central Committee and do my best to fulfil my tasks".

The National Assembly examined and passed the Law on Penal Procedure and the Law on Nationality.

Most of the time at this session was devoted to the examination of the country's socio-economic situation in the first six months of 1988, the key problems being related to food, prices and money (See excerpts of the Report of the Council of Ministers in this issue).

The deputies made practical recommendations to the Council of Ministers with a view to a good coordination of resources and expenditures in the 1988 budget and to solving urgent socio-economic problems. When examining and approving the draft-budget for 1988 the National Assembly proposed measures to re-arrange industrial-agricultural production, raise productivy, efficiency and the quality of products, increase revenues and reduce expenditures, fight corruption and waste... These measures will effectively contribute to combating inflation, strengthening socialist legality, maintaining order and discipline, fighting negative phenomena, which have shown a tendency to multiply over recent years.

The National Assembly passed a resolution approving the foreign policies pursued by the Council of Ministers in implementation of the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress. Its activities in this field have made important contributions to the consolidation of relations between Vietnam on the one hand and the Soviet Union, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, the People's Republic of Kampuchea and other brother countries on the other; to the broadening of our external relations; and to the strengthening of peace in Southeast Asia and in the world.

The National Assembly hailed the results achieved at the recent Soviet-US Summit in Moscow and ex-

(Continued on page 6)

RESOLUTION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

The National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,

Basing itself on Articles 83 and 147 of the Constitution; and acting on the recommendations of the Council of Ministers, the External Relations Committee and the Legislative Committee of the National Assembly,

Has resolved

1. That the Preamble to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is to be amended to make it conform to the foreign policy of the Party and the State in the present revolutionary stage, which is to defend peace, create favourable international conditions for the construction and defence of Vietnam, strengthen our relations of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union, Laos, Kampuchea and the other socialist countries, broaden our relations with South-east Asian countries and other countries regardless of social regime on the basis of the principle of peaceful coexistence; solve all problems arising in international relations through peaceful negotiations; strive to restore the traditional friendship between the Vietnamese and Chinese peoples; normalize relations between the two countries for the sake of their fundamental and lasting interests and for peace and socialism in the world.

2. That amendments to the "Preamble" to the Constitution are to be proposed by the State Council on the basis of recommendations by the External Relations Committee and Legislative Committee of the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers, and are to be submitted to the National Assembly at its next session.

Hanoi, 28 June 1988
LE QUANG DAO
Chairman of the National Assembly

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF DO MUOI CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

On 22 June 1988 the Eighth National Assembly of the SRV elected Do Muoi, Political Bureau member and secretary of the CPV Central Committee, Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Below is a short biography of Do Muoi.

Do Muoi was born on 2 February 1917, into a peasant family in Dong My village, Thanh Tri district, on the outskirts of Hanoi. He later worked as a house painter.

He joined the Popular Front Movement in 1936 and became a member of the Indochinese Communist Party in 1939. In 1941, he was arrested by the French colonial administration and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. He was kept in Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi.

In March 1945, when the Japanese fascists staged a coup against the French colonialists in Indochina, he escaped from prison and immediately got in touch with the Party. He became a member of the Party Committee of Ha Dong province (now Ha Son Binh province) in charge of Ung Hoa and My Duc

districts and was one of the leaders of the local insurrection to seize power in the province.

After the August Revolution, he became Secretary of the Ha Dong Party Committee and in early 1946 Secretary of the Party Committee of Ha Nam (now Ha Nam Ninh) province. In late 1946 he was appointed Secretary of the Party Committee and Chairman of the Defence Committee of Nam Dinh (now Ha Nam Ninh) province.

In 1948, he was elected to the Party Committee of the Third Region and Secretary of the Party Committee of Ninh Binh (now Ha Nam Ninh) province. In 1950, he became Deputy-Secretary of the Party Committee, Vice-Chairman of the Resistance and Administrative Committee, and Political Commissar of the Military Command of the Third Inter-Zone.

In 1951 — 54, he was Secretary of the Party Committee, Chairman of the Resistance and Administrative Committee, and Political Commissar of the Military Command of the region lying along the left bank of the Red River.

In 1955, he was Secretary of the Party Committee and Chairman of the Military Administration of Hai Phong City. In March 1955, he became alternate member of the Party Central Committee.

In 1956, he was Vice-Minister, and in 1958, Minister of Home Trade.

In 1960, he became a full member of the Party Central Committee, at the Third Party Congress.

In 1967, he was appointed Chairman of the State Pricing Commission and head of the Government Inspection Group.

In 1969, he became Deputy-Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Commission for Capital Construction, and in 1973, Deputy-Prime Minister and Minister of Construction.

In 1976, at the Fourth Party Congress he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee and became alternate member of the Political Bureau. He was also Deputy-Prime Minister in charge of capital construction, industry and material supply. From March 1975 to late 1978 he was in charge of the socialist transformation of private industry and commerce in southern Vietnam.

He was successively elected to the second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth National Assemblies. In July 1981, he was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

At the Fifth Party Congress (March 1982) he was elected to the Party Central Committee and became member of the Political Bureau. He remained Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers in charge of capital construction, industry, and material supply.

At the Sixth Party Congress, he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee which made him a member of its Political Bureau and permanent member of its Secretariat.

At the third session of the eighth National Assembly he was elected Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

THE THIRD...

(Continued from page 4)

pressed support for the great efforts of the Soviet Union in the difficult struggle to eliminate nuclear weapons and defend world peace and the nations' security.

It expressed support for the declaration of the Havana conference held in May 1988 by the foreign ministers of the non-aligned countries (see *Vietnam Courier* No. 8, 1988); welcomed the Geneva conference on a political settlement of the Afghan problem; and hailed the just struggle of the Afghan people for the implementation of the agreement and the safeguarding of the fruits of the Afghan revolution.

The National Assembly approved the good will and principled stance of the Government of the SRV on the problem of the Hoang Sa (Paracels) and Truong Sa (Spratley) islands: on the one hand Vietnam affirms its sovereignty over these islands and on the other is ready to solve this problem through negotiations. Pending negotiations, both side should refrain from using force so as not to cause the situation to worsen.

The National Assembly approved the decision to withdraw 50,000 Vietnamese volunteer troops and the Vietnamese volunteers' Command from Kampuchea in 1988, regarding this as an important contribution to a political solution of the Kampuchean problem, for the sake of peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The National Assembly hailed the talks between Chairman Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk and hoped that they would be continued in this direction. Meanwhile the National Assembly expressed support for the unofficial talks in two stages between the Kampuchean parties and the countries concerned, including Vietnam according to the principles agreed upon by Vietnam and Indonesia on 29 July 1988 in Ho Chi Minh City.

The National Assembly passed a resolution on the changes to be made to the "Preamble" to our Constitution to make it conform to the foreign policy being pursued by the Party and the State in the present revolutionary stage.

FOOD, PRICES AND MONEY

Editor's Note: *The intricate developments in the food situation as well as in that of prices and money have affected the whole socio-economic picture in Vietnam. At the third session of the Eighth National Assembly (22 — 28 June 1988) Vo Van Kiet, Acting Chairman of the Council of Ministers, on behalf of the Government read a report covering the first half of this year. The report consists of four parts:*

1. The implementation of the State plan

2. The food situation

3. Prices and money

4. The principal measures envisaged for the second half of the year

We publish in this issue excerpts from the second and third parts. The title is ours.

The Food Situation

Since the beginning of this year the northern provinces have been struck by a very serious food shortage...

The situation in the State sector was particularly tense in January and February. In January the food available in the northern provinces covered only one-fourth of the minimum needs of the key areas — that is one-sixth of the normal needs. This drove up the price of rice day after day, the market price out-stripping by far the State-fixed price, pushing up the prices of other commodities and seriously worsening the living conditions of the wage-earners, especially those in the lower-income brackets, workers and State employees in the mining areas and in the border provinces.

As soon as a serious food shortage became known in the countryside, the Standing Committee of the Council of Ministers directed all ministries, branches and provincial people's committees north of Binh Tri Thien province to undertake relief measures. Many teams of cadres were sent to the provinces to supervise relief work and help in preventing famine. Paddy from State stores was distributed to the most needy people. The Standing Committee of the Council of Ministers also ordered food to be sent from the South and imported from abroad. So far the southern provinces have sent to the north 260,000 tonnes of rice, twice as much as in the same period last year. Tien Giang, Cuu Long and An Giang provinces have worked hardest to collect food, while Ho Chi Minh City has bought food on the spot to help cover its needs and reserved part of its quota from the central stocks for helping the northern provinces.

The State has devoted a part of the food collected to relief work in addition to extra appropriations from the budget. More vegetable seeds and fertilizers have also been sent to the provinces.

In the famine areas Party committees, mass organizations and people's committees (as in Nghe Tinh) have mobilized the people in providing mutual assistance, and in growing subsidiary food crops. The authorities drew from food reserves and called on State employees and workers to give part of their State-supplied food to the needy.

The above-mentioned situation in the first place reflects the severe and long-term gaps between food supply and demand in our country, particularly in the North. Over the past five years food production has shown no or little increase while the rate of population growth has risen too fast, thus reducing more and more the per capita food availability, especially in the North. North of Binh Tri Thien, it went down from 264 kg in 1982 to 247 kg in 1985 and 230 kg in 1987.

It is clear that so long as production develops but slowly, while the population increases at a fast rate and the State has to supply food to growing numbers of personnel, persistent difficulties in food supply are unavoidable. Even in normal years, in the countryside — especially in the North — 5-10% of peasants (about 2-3 million people) suffer from food short-

age owing to local crop failures or shortages of manpower.

The particularly widespread and serious food shortage in the past months has been compounded by the following factors:

— Food reserves in the countryside were insufficient: the 1987 spring crop was bad so that the peasants had to live on loans; the 1987 autumn crop was fairly good but the peasants had to harvest even early rice (beginning of September, October) to pay their debts. The food funds of the cooperatives and the districts were also very small.

As the State could not supply enough food to State employees and workers, many of them had to procure food from rural areas or buy it on the free market, thus reducing the amount available in the countryside and pushing up the price of paddy, thereby worsening the living conditions of the needy peasants who did not have the cash to buy food on the market.

— The widespread food shortage has had bad psychological repercussions making it difficult to regulate food movements in the countryside. People who had surplus food refrained from selling because money was depreciating while the price of food was rising fast. Those who had cash both in town and countryside used it to build food reserves, thus creating even more tension on the market.

The major shortcoming in the guidance work of the Council of Ministers lay in its failure to fully grasp the above mentioned factors and to anticipate the shortage of food in late 1987 and early 1988 both in the State sector and among the people. As a result it failed to take the special measures required to prevent its happening or restrict its consequences; it failed to provide concentrated guidance for collecting food grain and transporting it to needy areas in the last months of 1987; it failed to closely follow the situation in some famine areas; it showed hesitation in importing food due to its failure to perceive the necessity to make up for the shortage and build up reserves.

It can be asserted that should the Council of Ministers have foreseen the situation in time and should the administrations at all levels have urgently engaged in relief operation with a full sense of responsibility, we could have averted the regrettable events that have happened in some provinces. For this situation the Council of Ministers admits its part of responsibility before the National Assembly.

— Following a review of the food situation in the past months, we assert that in the time ahead we must resolutely adopt comprehensive measures encompassing production, storage, processing, distribution, consumption, building of reserves, import of food, reduction of the rate of population growth, redistribution of the population, readjustment of planning, following the sprit of Resolution No. 10 of the Political Bureau on the renvation of our agricultural economy, which has amended and completed our economic policies and is aimed at basically solving the food problem in our country. At the same time, we must accurately assess and forecast the general situation as well as that in each region, so as to take timely measures to cope with urgent problems.

For the immediate future, while strengthening its guidance over the planting of the autumn crop and preparations for the winter crop, the Council of Ministers has ordered the sending of materials and money to the countryside right at harvest time in order to procure food, first of all through economic contracts, to ensure the full collection of spring and summer rice, and of tax arrears as well as of debts due by farmers in connection with past crops.

Prices and Money

1. Prices

The prices of food grain and other foodstuffs and that of gold have risen sharply pushing up those of materials and commodities in all places in succession.

In the organized market, prices have followed the rise on the free market, rising even higher than market prices in many cases, causing ever sharper rises and disturbances in free-market prices.

In the procurement of goods for export to sector II (i.e. to the non-socialist countries) State agencies have kept competing with each other, thereby driving prices up: a kilo of coffee which could be bought in January 1988 for 1,300 — 1,500 *dong* now costs 2,500 *dong*, a kilo of high-grade shrimp now costs 20,000 *dong* instead of 5,000; the same happened with other export goods.

Since the beginning of this year, paddy has been bought, both with and without economic contracts at prices close to those on the free market. As the shortage developed, the price of paddy began to soar right during the autumn harvest. The price of paddy in the Mekong delta has risen from 90 — 100 *dong* in January 1988 to 220-240 *dong*/kg, and that in the Red River delta from 180 dong to 400 *dong*/kg. The prices of pork and sea fish have risen still faster and the trend is continuing.

The soaring price of paddy has pushed up those of food grain and other foodstuffs and of industrial consumer goods. The provinces have repeatedly readjusted the selling prices, even those of rationed commodities, so that every month wages have also had to be readjusted. In Hanoi the price of pork has shot up from 900 *dong*/kg in January 1988 to 4,500 *dong* in

Workers greeting the completion of the No. 1 discharge tunnel of the Hoa Binh hydropower project.

Photo: HA MUI

mid-June. In Ho Chi Minh City the price of rice has gone up from 175 *dong/kg* to 470; that of pork from 850 to 2,850. The retail prices of many industrial consumer goods have also risen by between 1.5 and three times.

Regarding the prices of materials, the State has maintained fixed prices. Wholesale prices are kept far lower than cost prices or import prices, while retail prices have been badly managed. This has led to repeated resellings of materials by buyers for profit; many government offices and enterprises under cover of "business association" have thus resold materials supplied by the State in order to benefit from price differentials. Those illegal dealings by State enterprises and cooperatives have resulted in heavy losses of materials, and higher prices. Worse still, such practices have corrupted a fairly large number of cadres.

Price hikes and fluctuations together with money depreciation have had a serious impact on the economy and become a cause of concern for the whole society.

Relations of distribution have been upset and unjust discrepancies in income and living conditions have worsened. Honest toilers — wage earners in the first place — have suffered most; traders, especially the big ones, have reaped excessive profits; dishonest elements in trading agencies, State enterprises and other sectors of society have taken advantage of the situation to fill both their pockets and the coffers of their employers, thereby harming the State's as well as the working people's interests.

— As a result of price fluctuations, the price ratio between industrial and agricultural products has rapidly changed to the detriment of industry. While the prices of paddy and agricultural commodities bought by the State have rapidly risen, those of the materials and industrial goods it sells have been slower to rise (for example: the price ratio between chemical fertilizer and paddy was 1 urea unit = 3 paddy units in 1985, 1 urea unit = 2.5 paddy units in 1987, then 1 urea unit = 2 paddy units). This has been an important factor contributing to growing budget deficit and shortage of cash. It should be said that although the prices of agricultural products have skyrocketed, all the benefits have not gone to the peasants; in a number of cases intermediaries have pocketed the increments.

— Price fluctuations have made their influence felt on the State budget. Budget deficit has grown because the increase in revenues cannot catch up with that in expenditures, all expenditures being quickly affected by increases in prices. State bank is constantly and ever more seriously short of cash.

Its capital has dwindled because by the time it recovers its loans, the money will have depreciated.

— Due to constant price fluctuations, the central and regional administrations, all departments, and individual enterprises meet with great difficulties in planning and accounting work. Snags occur in funding and marketing; accounting does not truthfully reflect profits and losses; it is impossible to have a clear idea of the results of operations. Manufacturing and trading organisations tend to keep large inventories and wait for prices to rise while hoarding develops among the population.

— Price disturbances provide opportunities for hostile elements, speculators and smugglers to sabotage our economy.

In face of this situation, the Party and the State have analysed its causes and adopted measures to cope with it.

First of all, price rises are the direct consequence of inflation. For many years now our economy has faced serious imbalances between production and consumption, between demand and supply in many

fields. Errors and shortcomings committed in price readjustments undertaken in 1981 and 1985 have sharpened those imbalances, increased budget deficit, aggravated inflation, augmented the volume of money in circulation out of all proportion to any increase in the volume of goods produced.

Early this year, the serious food shortage and the skyrocketing food prices constitute a very important factor driving up the prices of all commodities.

Price hikes are also due to shortcomings in the implementation of the new managerial mechanism. Although we have taken a number of measures aimed at vigorously promoting the dynamism of economic operations, in all branches, provinces and bases, we have been slow in consolidating and building macro-economic managerial institutions, especially in the fields of finance, money, prices and market, circulation of materials, goods, import-export... This has led to erroneous trend in management which have eroded State control over our material resources (materials, goods, capital, foreign currency reserves). The State cannot concentrate on solving urgent tasks and checking dangerous price fluctuations in a timely way.

Price disturbances over the last six months have also been due to shortcomings in price control, particularly concerning the rate of exchange and the wholesale prices of materials as fixed by the Council of Ministers. Too much time was spent on discussions while decisions were late to arrive, thus creating a waiting mood and hesitation among producers and traders and leading to bottlenecks in production and marketing, delays in policy implementation, loss of State revenues, and profiteering by dishonest elements.

Loose management of the market and prices had been major shortcomings of State organs at the centre and in the provinces. In the provinces, this is the direct responsibility of people's committees.

For the immediate future, as pointed out in State and Party resolutions, in order to ease the rise in prices and eventually stabilize them, well-coordinated measures must be applied to out a brake on inflation, reduce the imbalance between revenues and expenditures, between the volumes of money and goods, and solve the food problem in particular.

As regards prices, we have to carry out two important tasks at the same time: to set up a rational price system serving the renovation of economic management vigorously and steadily, and to conduct effective price management with a view to gradually stabilizing prices.

The rational readjustment of the wholesale prices of means of production and freight costs — which are too low as compared with import prices and production costs — is quite necessary. But the readjustment should be acceptable to production bases and consumers in order to avoid sharp changes in prices and keep them stable for sometime. To this end, we should proceed cautiously, combine price readjustments with anti-inflationary measures and the reorganization of production. We must apply advanced economic and technical norms, raise productivity and product quantity so as to have reasonable costs and prevent selling prices from pushing up market prices, thus creating the prerequisites for accurate calculation of production costs.

We aver that to work out a one-price mechanism will lead to many advantages and must be our objective. However, to go from a two-price mechanism to a one-price one we should make rational steps suited to the economic situation and must have at our disposal certain material conditions, stocks of goods in the first place. In the near future regarding a number of basic materials either produced at home or imported from abroad like coal, electricity, gasoline, iron, steel, wood, paper... we shall provisionally adopt a two-price policy.

— Stable wholesale prices of materials must be applied to all branches, production bases, and consumers involved in State plans and economic contracts with the State.

— Commercial selling prices of materials are to be applied to other production bases and to the people in general.

Other materials are to be sold at commercial prices, conformable to State policy on production and consumption.

Given the present acute shortage of materials and continual price fluctuations, the struggle against speculation cannot be conducted through a pricing policy alone. What is even more important is to improve the management of materials, strengthen control over reserves of materials according to set norms, audit accounting of materials, stop and punish free-market trading of strategic materials which only the State is entitled to produce or import.

While the market prices of paddy and rice are still subject to wide fluctuations, all buying, selling and clearing operations between the State and the peasants must be conducted mainly through economic contracts, in which rational price ratios are to be applied.

With regard to a number of major export goods whose buying prices are being artificially pushed up, like shrimp, cuttlefish, pepper, coffee, cinnamon, the State could

fix maximum buying prices which conform to various local production and marketing conditions. The State will soon issue regulations on import, export, the management and use of foreign currency, fix a rational price ratio... Those measures are necessary if we are to restore order and discipline in the procurement of goods for export.

Agricultural products outside contracts are bought at close to market prices directly from their producers and a struggle is being waged against negative phenomena like speculation and unbridled competition.

In retail trade, in the immediate future, some vital consumer goods will be sold at two prices: a stable retail price for wage-earners and people enjoying priorities, and a commercial price for other people.

The application of retail prices depends on conditions in each province. Those provinces which enjoy favourable conditions (enough goods and cash available) may keep granting allowances to make up for price rises in rationed goods, but this should not interfere with the balance in their budgets.

Other commodities will be sold at commercial prices while luxury goods will be sold at market prices.

Prices have a direct impact on the people's living conditions. Therefore, in a period of heavy inflation the State must control the prices of necessities. Along with the gradual stabilization of the economy and the renovation of the managerial mechanism, the State will broaden in an orderly manner the rights and the responsibilities of basic economic units concerning pricing and price management while perfecting the tools for State management of prices and market.

The Council of Ministers has issued a new regulation on the devolution of power for price management to various echelons, listing those items the prices of which are to be fixed by the Council of Ministers and those the prices of which are to be fixed by the Chairmen of provincial and municipal people's committees. Basic economic units are authorized to fix the prices of items not mentioned in the above-mentioned lists in accordance with the principles of the State for price fixation. This is an important legal instrument to restore order in the field of price management. The various branches, localities and basic economic units should strictly implement it. The competent bodies are responsible for supervising and controlling the implementation of the regulation on the devolution of power for price management, thus helping to restore order in the field of prices and gradually to stabilize them.

Checking plants of the NN. 27 rice variety in an experimental field.

Photo: TRONG NGHIEP

2. Money and Credit

The direct cause of the rapidly increasing issue of currency in the first five months of the year was the great budget deficit, as the money issued did not return to the Bank. It was also due to shortcomings in the management of the volume of money in circulation and of credit, and to the large inventories of unsold materials and goods in all branches and at all levels.

Bank credit operations still rely on administrative subsidies instead of being subject to economic accounting, and are not strictly controlled. Fund raising is insignificant; loans are mostly granted in newly-issued money; interest rates are low as compared with price rises and the declining purchasing power of money, so that the borrowers are not eager to boost their

turnover and pay back their debts to the Bank.

The management of cash shows many loopholes. The Bank cannot supply cash in time to its customers, while its own operations are still beset with negative phenomena — hence a loss of customers' confidence. For their part, many production and trading enterprises keep more cash than they really need. (They remit to the Bank less than 50% — only 30% in some cases — of their daily cash receipts instead of the mandatory 70%).

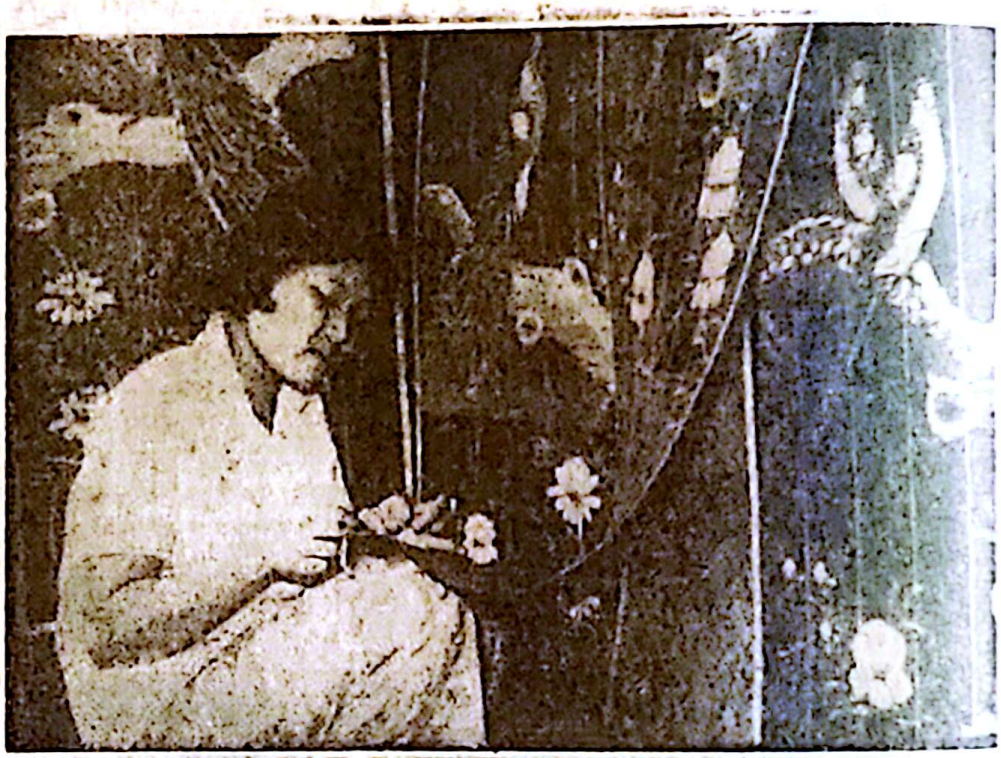
In the coming third quarter of the year, the need for cash to procure food, agricultural products, export goods, pay wages and cover other expenses will be even greater. Failure to meet these requirements will worsen living conditions. But if we are to keep issuing money without taking the necessary measures to make it flow back to State coffers, this will lead to extremely dangerous consequences.

The Council of Ministers is taking measures to provide enough cash for the normal operations of production and circulation, and for social life, while reducing deficit cash spending. An important task is to strive to make money flow back to the Bank, expand clearing operations through the Bank, accelerate the business turnover through the Bank, and strengthen the role of the Bank as a major clearing centre for the whole of society. To this end, together with measures aimed at checking budget deficit, reducing price rises and eventually stabilizing prices, the following urgent measures are to be taken in the field of money and credit.

— To raise funds from among the people and economic units to be used as the main source of credit; to shift banking operations over to economic accounting and monetary transactions; to set up specialized banks; to abolish the granting of administrative subsidies through bank credit; to make sure credit is properly used, to ensure proper returns from borrowed funds; to prevent the use of credit for speculative ends; to recover loans that are not being used effectively; to readjust interest rates so as to stimulate the turnover of materials and goods; to penalize those units that violate credit principles; to help consolidate economic accounting and the socialist mode of enterprise.

— To strengthen the management of cash in production and trading units, together with improving clearing operations through the Bank and expanding them. To make large use of clearing checks by economic organizations and people with accounts in the Bank. The Bank must rapidly collect and regulate cash to meet the needs of the economy, first of all the procurement of food and the payment of wages. Production and trading units are duty-bound to remit their cash receipts in the Bank and clear their accounts through the Bank without using cash.

— To organize regular check-ups on the granting of credit and the keeping of cash; to recover the cash in excess of the amount allowed by the Bank. The Council of Ministers is directing the Bank to improve its operations, heighten its sense of responsibility, effectively serve its customers, and do away with negative phenomena.



Palm blinds for export.

Photo: NGOC ANH

URGENT PROBLEMS IN PARTY BUILDING IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE SIXTH PARTY CONGRESS

The fifth plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam was held from 14 to 20 June 1988 to deal with urgent problems in Party building.

General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh delivered an important speech.

The plenum unanimously holds that in the national democratic revolution, our Party led the people in heroic struggle, made great sacrifices and won big victories. It was tempered in this struggle, matured in it, firmly preserved its fine revolutionary nature and built valuable traditions. It worked out a correct line and correct methods for the conduct of the revolution.

Since launching the socialist revolution on a national scale, the Party has made great efforts in building socialism. It has securely preserved the fruits of the revolution, firmly defended the homeland and strengthened international solidarity and cooperation. The Party, however, has made a number of mistakes, especially in the socio-economic field, which have had serious consequences. The Sixth Party Congress came to the conclusion that those were mistakes committed in major policies and guidelines, in strategic leadership and in the organisation of policy implementation.

Since the Sixth Congress, in a spirit of renewal, the Central Committee, the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Party have concretized the content of the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress by adopting a number of policies and guidelines in matters of socio-economic development, culture, art and literature, the press, security, national defence, foreign affairs and others, which opened up new prospects. An atmosphere of democracy and frankness in criticism and self-criticism has begun to make itself felt within the Party and in society at large. The Party apparatus and its body of cadres have been reorganized to a certain extent. Progress has been recorded in the style of leadership. Positive factors have made their appearance in some branches and regions. Although the fighting will of some cadres and Party members has faltered and their revolutionary ideal has faded, the majority of them, from town to country, from grassroots to the central level have firmly preserved their fine revolutionary qualities.

However, our country is still facing acute socio-economic difficulties, and in certain respect the situation has continued to deteriorate. Many negative phenomena continue to occur in the Party and in society. The Party's leadership in politics, ideology and organization is not yet equal to its revolutionary tasks, to the requirements of the revolution, the need for renewal, and the demands and aspirations of the people. The Party's vanguard class character has declined, and its fine revolutionary traditions have been damaged. The two major shortcomings in Party building are: violation of democratic centralism, showing both lack of democracy and slack discipline; and too much delay in changing its views and policies in personnel work, in working out and implementing plans for promoting key cadres, particularly those who are soon to assume positions of leadership. The resolution of the Political Bureau on purifying the Party and raising its fighting spirit, on purifying the State apparatus, and on promoting healthy social relations, has been acclaimed by cadres, Party members, and the people at large and has obtained a number of results, but its implementation has not been steady and vigorous enough and only limited effects have been recorded.

This situation is due mainly to our errors in working out socio-economic policies and our neglect of ideological and organizational work.

The plenum stresses: we are carrying out a policy of all-out renewal, as laid down by the Sixth Party Congress. The revolution in our country is at an important turning-point. The situation requires that we rapidly strengthen the Party, raise the quality of its leadership and its fighting spirit, strengthen and renovate Party building.

The general orientation in Party building at present is as follows: to develop the fine revolutionary nature and traditions of the Party; to grasp and implement the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress and those of the Central Committee and Political Bureau; to renew thinking, organization, cadre work, the style of leadership and of work; to raise the revolutionary consciousness and foster the ideological qualities, competence and ability for political leadership of the cadres and Party members; to broaden democracy together with tightening discipline within the Party; to strengthen the ties between the Party and the working class and the toiling people; to make the Party equal to the requirements of the new tasks.

The plenum points out: Between now and 1990, the entire Party will concentrate on a number of urgent tasks in Party building, aiming at the following:

— Making the entire Party, people and army fully agree with, thoroughly understand, and correctly implement the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress and all related policies; stepping up the education of cadres and Party members in communist ideology and morality; increasing their working ability, their class consciousness, and their vanguard, exemplary role; consolidating the people's confidence in the Party's leadership;

— Effecting a systematic reorganization of the Party and State apparatuses and the mass organizations, and raising the quality of Party organizations, at the grassroots;

— Working out a long-term plan in personnel work and strengthening the ranks of cadres holding key posts at all levels and in all departments;

— Strictly implementing the principle of democratic centralism by broadening democracy, enforcing discipline, stepping up self-criticism and criticism, strengthening unity of views within the Party, combating bureaucratism and strengthening the ties between the Party and the masses;

— Concretizing and institutionalizing step by step the mechanism whereby the Party is the leader, the working people the masters, and the State the manager, thus effectively broadening socialist democracy and bringing into full play the dynamism of the apparatus.

The plenum lays down the following urgent tasks for Party buiding.

1. To Renovate and Strengthen Ideological Work

We must step up theoretical studies, do practical research, and sum up experience in order to promptly and correctly concretize Party resolutions in all spheres, especially prepare a programme and strategy for socio-economic development to be submitted to the Seventh Party Congress, reorganize staff work and research, and increase the flow of information.

If opinions differ on new and complicated questions we must study them together, sum up the experience gained and listen to the opinions of the masses, of experts and scientists, promote freedom of thought and discuss matters democratically and frankly in order to come to a correct conclusion. Once this conclusion has been embodied in a Party resolution, all Party members and cadres, without exception, must abide by the resolution.

We must renovate political and ideological education in both form and content, organization and method, personnel and equipment; criticize all manifestations of conservatism and opposition to renewal, while reining in those who show rashness or try to gain advantages for themselves under pretext of renewal. We must fight against opportunistic and dishonest elements seeking to misuse renovation in order to satisfy their own ambitions. We must enhance democracy, openness, truthfulness and militancy while protecting State secrets, and consciously and actively defending the Party.

We must promote all forms of contact and dialogue with the masses, showing genuine respect for the people, maintaining close contact with them, listening to their opinions and trusting them.

We must strengthen leadership over and management of the press, publishing, culture, literature and art with a view to serving renovation and contributing to the implementation of Party resolutions.

We must develop the good results and do away with the shortcomings emerging in the press, publishing, literature and art.

We must resolutely and effectively fight against the enemy's psywar tricks, their attempts at propaganda and distortion, and all schemes to misuse democracy and openness to oppose the work of the Party and the people.

Party committees and leading and managing cadres at all levels must personally engage in ideological work.

2. To Strengthen Organization and Personnel Work

We must clearly define the roles, tasks, inter-relations and work procedures of all Party and State organs and mass organizations in order to consolidate them and renovate their organization, eventually to completely renovate the Party apparatus. The Party will present candidates to elected bodies, which will

conduct democratic elections. Party authorities at all levels shall not act in the place of State organs in the management, guidance and execution of socio-economic tasks.

Party committees at all levels, and all cadres and Party members must abide by the principles of democratic centralism, collective leadership, and personal responsibility. They must broaden criticism and self-criticism, maintain Party discipline, strengthen solidarity and unity of mind within the Party on the basis or the line, policies, and organizational principles of the Party. They must build a new method and style of work, do away with bureaucratism, red tape, formalism, failure to match words with deeds, lack of decision, lack of responsibility, and lack of resolve.

We must strengthen control and supervisory work in the Party, first of all by Party committees, so as to obtain effective results.

We must form a body of qualified and competent cadres able to serve the cause of renovation, first of all leading cadres at key posts at various levels and in various departments, especially at the central and grassroots levels, together with competent staffers in every field.

We must rejuvenate step by step our body of cadres in order to ensure continuity in leadearship at each level. We must step up planning in personnel work, build up reserves for eventual succession, have veterans work side by side with younger elements. We must avoid formalism in renovation and rejuvenation and basing this work entirely on the cadres' ages and academic degrees. We must do away with the feudal and parochial sense of hierarchy.

From now on, at each Party committee election, including the Central Commitee, one-third of its former members are to be replaced. In general, secretaries of Party committees should not stay in office for more than ten years.

Managing cadres in the State apparatus, in production and trading enterprises, and key cadres in mass organizations should not necessarily be members of the Party. Junior cadres who are really competent and well qualified may be directly promoted to leading positions at higher levels. We must rotate cadres in a planned manner; send cadres from central offices to work at local or grassroots levels for a certain period of time, while promoting competent and well-qualified cadres with many years of experience at local or grassroots levels, to work at the central level; remove from leading positions all cadres lacking the necessary moral and professional qualifications.

We must put an end to the practice of shifting incompetent or disciplined cadres to another post and allowing them to keep their ranks and salaries, even promoting them.

We must definitely refrain from promoting leading, managerial and technical cadres to higher positions when they are found by their collectives to be not equal to their new jobs. We must improve a number of regimes and policies with regard to cadre work, following the principle of remuneration according to the work done and with due consideration for talent.

3. To Raise Party Members' Qualities and the Militancy of Grassroots Party Organizations

The plenum affirms: Party members must first of all show full consciousness of the communist ideal, play a vanguard and exemplary role, evince a self-sacrificing spirit, prove their ability for political leadership, always be the first in implementing Party and State policies, display a positive attitude toward renewal, and demonstrate their ability to carry out renovation. As Party members, they must work zealously and not engage in exploitation — this is a matter of principle. In the present situation, the Party encourages its members, apart from discharging their tasks, to develop their family economies so as to improve their incomes. We must gradually develop and rejuvenate the Party, educate, supervise and manage Party members, raise their moral and professional standards, and expel from the Party those who fail to meet the qualifications.

The plenum stresses the necessity to strengthen and raise the militancy of the Party's grassroots organizations, make them the leading nuclei of their collectives and the supervisors of managerial organs and department heads. We must reinforce the ranks of Party stalwarts at the grassroots, strengthen Party cells, raise the quality of cell life: these are questions of decisive importance, in raising the militancy of Party grassroots organizations. Party authorities at all levels and in all branches and regions must do their utmost to strengthen Party bases, particularly the weaker ones, those directly related to the national economy, security, national defence, and those along our frontiers, on offshore islands, in mountainous regions, in regions difficult of access and in regions with large economic potentialities.

The plenum points to the need of correctly implementing the resolution on Party building together with the Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress and the resolutions of the Party C.C. and the Political Bureau. We must concentrate efforts on the urgent tasks of socio-economic development, combating inflation, carrying out the three major economic pro-

(Continued on page 17)

COMMUNIQUE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE OF THE KAMPUCHEAN, LAO AND VIETNAMESE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

An extraordinary conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was held on 11 July 1988 in Phnom Penh, capital of the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

The conference unanimously held that the Kampuchean people's achievements in all fields and positive developments in international relations favour a peaceful settlement of the Kampuchea issue and the re-establishment of peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

1. After six annual troop withdrawals starting in 1982, the seventh pull-out involving 50,000 Vietnamese troops and the repatriation of the Command of the Vietnamese volunteer forces from Kampuchea in 1988 marks the further growth of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. After more than nine years of resolute struggle the Kampuchean people have achieved true resurrection. The Government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea is controlling the whole country and has increasingly taken upon itself the full responsibility for national defence. Its position in the international arena has been steadily reinforced. World public opinion hails Vietnam's major troop withdrawal in 1988 as an important contribution to a political solution of the Kampuchea issue and to peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea reaffirm that all the Vietnamese volunteer troops shall have been withdrawn from Kampuchea by 1990 as has been announced, and should a political solution to the Kampuchea issue be achieved before that deadline, a complete troop withdrawal would be carried out within the framework of such a solution.

2. At present world public opinion ever more strongly opposes a return to power of the genocidal Pol Pot clique after the withdrawal of all Vietnamese volunteer troops from Kampuchea. The conference calls on peace-loving people and governments the world over to vigorously condemn the crime of genocide committed by the Pol Pot clique, to eliminate all possibilities of their return to power and to demand an end to all supplies of arms, finances and sanctuaries to them by foreign countries. The Kampuchean people, their former victims, will struggle with the fullest determination to prevent the return of those genocidal criminals. It is the responsibility of all men of conscience the world over to prevent the Pol Pot criminals from reimposing their genocidal regime on Kampuchea.

3. It is to be regretted that the Statement and the Joint Communique issued on 3 and 5 July respectively by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference only reiterated their position over the last nine years concerning the Kampuchea issue and repeated their slanders against Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea, in an attempt to justify their alliance with the Polpotists and to cover up the latter's crime of genocide. Such an unrealistic position has brought about confrontation among Southeast Asian countries and driven the Kampuchea problem into an impasse over the past nine years.

The ASEAN countries are now attempting to turn the Jakarta cocktail party into a round of negotiation between Vietnam and the Kampuchean parties. This is completely at variance with the principles laid down in the Joint Communique of 29 July 1987 between Vietnam and Indonesia, which respectively represent the Indochinese and ASEAN groups of countries. The ASEAN countries want to return to their previous position adopted at the August 1987 Bangkok Conference, which distorted the Vietnamese-Indonesian Joint Communique and blocked the convening of the Jakarta cocktail party for nearly a year now.

While the Jakarta meeting is looked forward to by public opinion, the fact that the ASEAN countries are running counter to the general trend toward dialogue, that they cling to their unrealistic position and hostile attitude to Vietnam, Kampuchea and Laos, obviously constitutes an obstacle to dialogue and to the search for a political solution to the Kampuchea issue.

4. In such circumstance, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam once again affirm that the Jakarta cocktail party should be held in accordance with the principles laid down in the Vietnam-Indonesia Joint Communique issued in Ho Chi Minh City on 29 July 1987. In the first phase of the meeting, the Kampuchean parties shall exchange views on the internal problems of Kampuchea without any interference and pressure from the outside. In the second phase,

URGENT PROBLEMS...

(Continued from page 15)

grammes and the campaign to purify the Party and State apparatuses, raise their combativeness, and make for healthy social relations.

The fifth plenum of the Party Central Committee is confident that thanks to our resolve for renovation, our potentials and our experience, the Party will further improve its capacity for leadership and its fighting power in order to fully meet the requirements of the revolution and the expectations of the masses.

We must build the Party so that it fully deserves to be the Communist Party of Vietnam founded and fostered by President Ho Chi Minh.

The fifth plenum of the Party Central Committee has elected Comrade Dao Duy Tung, alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee and Party Secretary, to full membership of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Party Central Committee.

At this meeting, after hearing the report of the Political Bureau on the responsibilities of Ha Trong Hoa, Party C.C. member and Party Secretary of Thanh Hoa province, and after investigating a number of problems in the province, the Party Central Committee has taken disciplinary measures against Ha Trong Hoa by dismissing him from the functions of Central Committee member and Secretary of the Thanh Hoa Party Committee. ●

STATEMENT OF THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE SRV MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. On 12 July 1988, in Jakarta, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas on behalf of the ASEAN countries asked Vietnamese Ambassador to Indonesia Tran Huy Chuong to convey to Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, his confirmation that the ASEAN countries would respect the Vietnamese-Indonesian joint communiqué issued in Ho Chi Minh City on 29 July 1987 on the "cocktail party" in Jakarta, and that they have no intention of turning this informal meeting into a round of talks between Vietnam and the Kampuchean parties.

2. The SRV Ministry of Foreign Affairs is pleased to take note of the above-mentioned clarification by the Indonesian Foreign Minister. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach will, together with representatives of other countries, take part in the second stage of the Jakarta "cocktail party" on 25 July 1988.

3. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has communicated this clarification given by Indonesia on behalf of the ASEAN countries, to the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

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the countries concerned, including Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Thailand and other ASEAN countries, together with the Kampuchean parties, shall exchange views on the international aspect of the Kampuchea issue and on the question of peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

The cocktail party will thus involve in its first phase the two opposing parties in Kampuchea, and in its second phase, the two groups of countries in Southeast Asia. Therefore, all questions related to the organisation, agenda, and contents of the cocktail party must be agreed upon by the two parties in accordance with the principles laid down in the 29 July 1987 Vietnam-Indonesia Joint Communique. Neither party may impose its will on the other.

In this spirit, the People's Republic of Kampuchea declares its readiness to send representatives to the first phase of the cocktail party to be held in Jakarta on 25 July 1988. The Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam are waiting for the ASEAN countries to confirm their respect for the principles of the Vietnam-Indonesia Joint Communique issued in Ho Chi Minh City on 29 July 1987, and to clearly state that they will refrain from attempting to turn the cocktail party into a round of negotiation between Vietnam and the Kampuchean parties, in which case Vietnam and Laos will be ready to take part in the second phase of the Jakarta cocktail party with Indonesia, Thailand and other ASEAN countries.

5. The People's Republic of Kampuchea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have been consistently doing their utmost to contribute to a political settlement of the Kampuchea issue, and to turn Southeast Asia into a zone of peace, stability, friendship and cooperation. Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam call on the ASEAN countries to adopt a constructive position in response to the aspirations of the people in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, in the interests of peace and development in the region. ●

THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF KAMPUCHEA MUST BE SETTLED BY THE KAMPUCHEAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES

On 27 June 1988, SRV Minister of Foreign Affairs NGUYEN CO THACH granted an interview to Vietnam News Agency. Below is the full text of the interview.

QUESTION: Being just back from the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries on Disarmament and the United Nations' Special Session on Disarmament, would you please comment on the attitude of the participating countries toward the decision taken by the People's Republic of Kampuchea and by Vietnam to repatriate 50,000 Vietnamese volunteer troops in 1988.

ANSWER: I met many heads of state, heads of government, and foreign ministers. They all valued highly that decision. This troop withdrawal shows that Vietnam respects the independence of Kampuchea and that the PRK has grown strong enough to defend its own independence. The troop withdrawal is accelerating the process leading to a political settlement of the Kampuchea issue.

QUESTION: Will you comment on the worries publicly expressed in the US, Europe and the ASEAN countries about a possible return of the genocidal Polpotists after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese volunteeer troops?

ANSWER: Those worries are certainly justified. The development of the events requires that the world community take firm measures to rule out all possibilities of a comeback of the Polpotists.

QUESTION: What are the prospects for a "cocktail party" to be held in Jakarta?

ANSWER: They are bright. Vietnam is closely cooperating with Indonesia to make the party a reality.

QUESTION: Is there any obstacle?

ANSWER: There has been an attempt to turn the cocktail party into a round of negotiation between Sihanouk and Vietnam. That attempt is intended to sidetrack the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Over the past nine years, all military, political and diplomatic attempts to this end have failed, and today the People's Republic of Kampuchea is controlling the whole territory of Kampuchea. Those who have objected to the holding of the cocktail party in Jakarta now have to agree to attend such a party.

However, they are attempting to turn it into a round of negotiation between Vietnam and Sihanouk in order eventually to make it a total failure. Vietnam firmly opposes such an attempt. There is also a scheme to use the countries taking part in the second stage of the cocktail party to impose a solution to the internal affairs of Kampuchea. Vietnam resolutely rejects such a scheme and holds that the internal affairs of Kampuchea must be settled by the Kampuchean people themselves.

QUESTION: How do you assess your meeting with General Vessey, special envoy of the US President?

ANSWER: General Vessey and I were resolved to speed up the settlement of humanitarian issues on both sides. The two sides will negotiate in Hanoi in July the departure for the United States of people recently released from re-education camps. The meeting strengthened cooperation between the two countries in resolving humanitarian issues.

QUESTION: What about your meeting with Thai leaders?

ANSWER: My talks with Thai leaders opened a new chapter in relations between the two countries and in their cooperation to accelerate a political solution to the Kampuchea issue. That Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda, Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila and Commander-in-chief Chavalit Jongchajut accepted invitations to visit Vietnam testifies to an improvement in relations between the two countries.

QUESTION: Did the two sides discuss the problem of the illegal departures of Vietnamese?

ANSWER: Vietnam's law forbids and punishes illegal departures of Vietnamese for other countries.

Vietnam will hold talks with Thailand and other individual countries, to solve the problem of the illegal departures of Vietnamese for other countries. Vietnam has proposed that the United Nations Organization provide economic and financial assistance to those who have fled the country but now want to return home.

QUESTION: Did you discuss with Thailand its discriminatory policies against Vietnamese residents in that country?

ANSWER: Yes, I did. The Thai side agreed to consider the matter positively. ●

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR SOLIDARITY WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE (16 JUNE)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE WILL WIN

During the 12 years since the Soweto bloodbath on 16 June 1976, hundreds of other blood baths have occurred in South Africa. The apartheid monster, hated by the whole of mankind, has continued to shed the blood of the peoples in the country and in the region. Within only two years since the Botha administration promulgated the "state of emergency" in South Africa more than 50 democratic organizations and newspapers have been banned, thousands of people killed, and 25,000 others taken into custody.

Due to its extremely reactionary nature, the Botha administration has sunk into a political crisis, both internally and externally. In addition, its attempt to develop nuclear weapons aimed at turning South Africa into the only nuclear power in Africa and threatening other countries in the region has aggravated the crisis and set it in strong opposition to its own people as well as to others in the region.

The aspiration for freedom and democracy of the South African people has manifested itself even more vigorously. Their struggle to eliminate the apartheid regime, for their fundamental rights, has been supported by progressive forces across the world and has continuously grown. Following the uprising in Soweto, the African National Congress (ANC) and the working class in South Africa have been strengthened, as shown in the strike staged in 1987 by 370,000 miners, the active participation in the struggle of many white people and religious forces, the setting up of large anti-apartheid mass organizations such as the Democratic United Front (DUF, 500,000 members), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU, 1,000,000 members), the National Council of South African Trade Unions (NACTU, 400,000 members), etc. The recent 3-day general strike (on 6-8 June) involved nearly 3,000,000 Africans. This biggest strike for the past four years marked the peak of the struggle of the working class and people in South Africa.

World public opinion resolutely demands that serious sanctions be taken against the South African administration, considering them, the best support for the South African people in their effort to eventually eliminate the hateful apartheid regime. Only the ruling circles in the United States and Britain and some other reactionary forces have been persistently supporting the racists.

Together with all nations who cherish peace, independence, freedom and justice in the world, the Vietnamese people firmly support the just struggle of the South African people. We demand that the Botha administration stop its oppression of the South African people and unconditionally lift the "state of emergency" which is worsening the South African people's living conditions and may cause new "bloodbaths". The Botha administration must immediately release Nelson Mandela, the leader of the African National Congress who has been illegally detained over the last 25 years, and other patriots. Inspired by the fighting spirit of Soweto and Sharpville, the struggle of the South African people, however difficult and protracted it may be, will end in victory. ●

FROM BERLIN

A PEACE FORUM

The international meeting for nuclear-free zones held in Berlin, capital of the German Democratic Republic, ended after three days of work. The initiative taken by Comrade Honecker, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, met with warm response: more than one thousand delegates from 111 countries came to the meeting where they engaged in frank and open discussions.

The participants dealt with many aspects of disarmament, and exchanged views on the successive steps leading to a world without nuclear weapons. The aim was to help strengthen confidence and cooperation, solve regional problems, fulfil commitments, supervise and control the status of nuclear-free zones. A review was made of the practical experiences and the international significance of the nuclear-free zones in Latin America and the South Pacific. Stress was laid on the consolidation of nuclear non-proliferation, and proposals were put forward to set up similar zones in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Taking place as it did after the Soviet-US Summit in Moscow, the Berlin international forum highlighted the determination of the world's peoples to boost the process of nuclear disarmament and mankind's deepening consciousness of the cardinal task of safeguarding peace and international security. Most countries in the world do not possess nuclear weapons. They have a vital interest in, and the power to contribute to, staying the arms race and abolishing nuclear weapons. At the Berlin meeting a common spirit prevailed: should the non-nuclear countries in the world set up nuclear-free zones and undertake to abstain from the use of force in international relations and allow no foreign troops and military bases on their territories, this would be a decisive contribution to complete and radical disarmament. All nations demand that the nuclear countries undertake to respect the status of nuclear-free zones. In Berlin the Soviet Union reiterated her readiness to afford proper guarantees to the countries joining in the establishment of nuclear-free zones. The other nuclear countries should adopt the same unequivocal attitude.

Together with peace-loving forces the world over, the Vietnamese Government and people have been struggling for peace and security in the world as well as in the Asian-Pacific region and in Southeast Asia.

In this spirit, Vietnam supports the Soviet plan for peace in Asia and the Pacific, and the New Delhi Statement on the principles governing the effort to build a world without nuclear weapons and without the use of force; it supports the proposal of the Mongolian People's Republic concerning the signing of an international convention on the non-use of force in relations between the Asian-Pacific countries; it supports the proposal of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the peaceful reunification of Korea and the building of this peninsula into a nuclear-free zone; it supports the proposal of the ASEAN countries to set up a peaceful, free and neutral Southeast Asia as well as their draft legal document on a nuclear-free Southeast Asia. Vietnam hails the Rarotonga Treaty of the South Pacific countries which bans the production, stockpiling, use and testing of nuclear weapons in the area. Vietnam deems that the pledge made by the People's Republic of China never to be the first to use nuclear weapons assumes a positive significance and deserves praises.

VIETNAM JOINED THE COUNCIL FOR MUTUAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TEN YEARS AGO

Editor's Note: *Vietnam became an official member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) at its 32nd session held in late June 1978.*

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of this event of major economic and political significance, we publish below an article by Tran Duc Luong, Vice Chairman of the SRV Council of Ministers and Vietnamese permanent representative at CMEA.

Ten years ago, at the 32nd session (27-29 June 1978) of the CMEA, the SRV became an official member of this organization. This important event marked a new step in the development of cooperation relations between Vietnam and other CMEA member countries.

After ten years of participation by Vietnam in the CMEA we may look back at our achievements as one of its members and draw the necessary lessons in order to conduct socialist economic cooperation and association more effectively, gradually raise our economy's growth rate to the level of the other socialist countries, thus contributing to the consolidation and development of the socialist community.

In fact, our country has had economic relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries since the early 1950's during our war of resistance against the French colonialists, and especially during the years of the war against US imperialism.

It is our Party's policy to broaden relations of cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. As a full CMEA member, we can more rapidly rehabilitate our war-torn country. That policy has been confirmed in the Resolutions of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Party Congresses. Our Party and Government have always paid great attention to developing comprehensive and long-term cooperation between our country and the Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries in the CMEA and considered this the cornerstone of our policy in international relationships.

During the past ten years, CMEA agencies have looked into many problems in order to cooperate with and help our country. Several principled provisions dealing with special measures aimed at more effective cooperation with Vietnam have been laid down at the 33rd CMEA session (June 1979). The 43rd (special) CMEA session adopted a resolution on a specially co-ordinated cooperation programme between CMEA European members on the one hand, and Vietnam, Cuba, and Mongolia on the other extending to the year 2005 and intended to gradually raise the level of economic development of those three countries to that of CMEA European countries.

The most urgent problem in our economy is that of energy. To help us solve it, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have helped us build a number of power plants, power lines and transformer stations. The Pha Lai thermopower plant and the hydro-electric power projects of Hoa Binh and Tri An, which have been or will soon be put into operation, will be a considerable source of energy for production and daily life. In addition, the GDR, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia are helping Vietnam build small-and medium-sized hydroelectric plants in central Vietnam. The Soviet Union is assisting Vietnam in designing a general scheme for the development of electrical energy up to the year 2000. The coal mines built with Soviet assistance are producing 90 per cent of our country's coal output. Poland and other countries have supplied Vietnam with coal mining equipment and machinery.

Oil and gas constitute an important economic branch of Vietnam. In 1987, the Vietnam-USSR joint venture "Vietsopetro" established with in the framework of the Vietnam-USSR Treaty on Oil and Gas Prospection and Exploitation on the continental shelf of southern Vietnam, produced the first tons of crude. This year, "Vietsopetro" plans to extract 670,000 tons. The first oil refinery and petrochemical complex in Vietnam is under construction with Soviet assistance.

Cooperation between Vietnam and other CMEA member countries in non-ferrous and ferrous metallurgy is developing. The Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR and Czechoslovakia have cooperated with Vietnam in bauxite prospection in southern Vietnam. Cooperation in the mining and processing of Vietnamese bauxite has been entered on the list of priorities and coopera-

for repayment. At first the Bank granted mostly short-term loans to achieve rapid turnover. But later, as funds accumulated, adjustments have been made in matters of credit. By granting loans only from its cash deposits and accumulated interests no deficit is produced due to credit operations — something which still plagues all State banks.

Starting from 1 June 1988, the Industrial-Commercial Bank has been using another method to draw idle money from the people, by issuing transferable deposit vouchers, both anonymous and nominal, for various amounts and terms. Barely five days after the issue of such vouchers 249.5 million dong were raised, of which 71.6% are from various strata of the people.

At present, the Industrial-Commercial Bank is making preparations for banking transactions related to import-export operations and is studying ways to join in the programme of economic development undertaken by Ho Chi Minh City within the framework of the recently promulgated law on foreign investment.

At the time of the establishment of the Industrial — Commercial Bank, sceptics believed it to be only a transient mode of enterprise which could not endure. Now after nine months of successful operation the Bank continues to progress. Experience is now being summed up with a view to an extensive application wherever conditions permit.

HUU XUAN SON

+ *We have been informed that starting on 1 July 1988, the whole State banking system in the country has shifted from the administrative subsidy-based system of management to economic accounting and the socialist mode of enterprise.*

VIETNAM JOINED...

(Continued from page 22)

The multilateral cooperation of other CMEA members with our country in the coming period will concentrate on the following main tasks:

— To create firm bases for socio-economic development by effectively using the natural and human resources of each country, using all available productive capabilities and paying special attention to the problems of food, consumer goods, and employment;

— To expand our export potentials, with due account taken of both the needs of CMEA member countries and the world market, gradually making trading between our country and others balanced and mutually advantageous.

— To create conditions for in-depth development of our economy, build a rational economic structure which takes into account the requirements of the country and the possibilities for raising funds abroad.

— To transfer modern technical means and technologies to our country in accordance with our requirements and capabilities for the development of our economy, science and technique, create conditions for us to effectively take part in the implementation of CMEA's comprehensive programme for technical-scientific progress up to the year 2000.

— To bring into full play our great potentials so as to raise the effectiveness of our cooperation with other CMEA member countries, mobilize all available resources of our economy, perfect the mode and mechanism of cooperation. Vietnam will gradually participate ever more in economic socialist association as a full and equal member of the socialist community.

VIETNAMESE WATER - PUPPETS TOURED AUSTRALIA

For the first time Vietnamese water-puppet shows were staged in Australia on the occasion of her bicentenary.

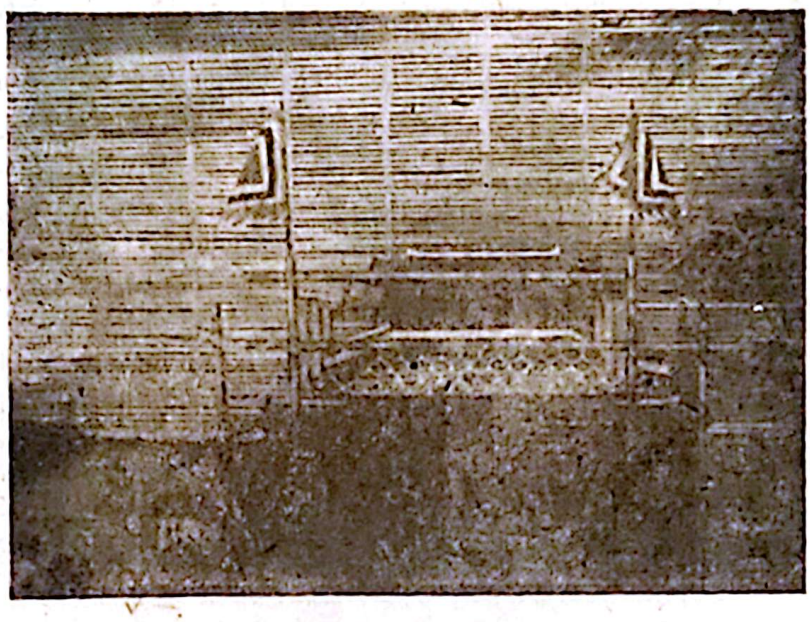
The Vietnamese troupe included 18 members, among them 15 puppeteers. Within a little more than a month it gave 40 performances in Melbourne, Adélaide and Perth to audiences totalling about 18,000. In Adélaide, it performed by the side of 50 other art ensembles from 20 countries. The Australian press and public opinion were unanimous in regarding those Vietnamese water-puppet shows as one of the highlights of the 1988 Adélaide Festival.

The repertoire of the Vietnamese troupe was called "Stories from a village" and totalled 14 numbers (author: Hoai Giao, director: Hoang Hue). The spectators were taken on a journey across the Red River delta, the cradle of traditional Vietnamese national culture. The shows were performed to the accompaniment of folk music. The stage was the surface of a pool in which was mirrored the curved roof of a pavilion sheltering the puppeteers. As a show began, firecrackers exploded in a cloud of smoke; tiny rockets fittingly called "ducks and drakes" zigzagged across the pool with a hissing sound; drums rolled and puppets of all descriptions emerged from under the water and came to life...

Following its tour of Australia the Vietnamese water-puppet troupe will attend the 15th International Festival of puppet shows in Tokyo late in July 1988.

PHUONG THINH

VILLAGE CULTURAL TRADITIONS



Model of a water-puppet stage.

Photo: TUONG LINH

According to the inscriptions on its stone stelae as well as written records, Nguyen Xa village (Dong Hung district, Thai Binh province) in the Red River delta was set up sometime in the reign of Trinh Tong (1782-1786). It now boasts three large communal houses, four temples, six shrines and two bridges, all built in ancient styles. Village festivals feature traditional sports, games and other entertainments, e.g.: wrestling matches, fireworks displays, *cheo* and *tuong* operas, folk songs, water-puppet shows...

For a large population, the village has but little crop land. That is why besides rice farming, the inhabitants engage in many sidelines: cloth weaving, making firecrackers, pastry and sweets, bamboo blinds, rush mats, metal forging, art handicrafts, small trade... Their occupations cause people from Nguyen Xa to travel widely in the country. Of the eight patron saints of *hat cheo* (popular theatre) in Vietnam, four were native of Thai Binh province of whom two came from Nguyen Xa village. No wonder Nguyen Xa has been supplying *cheo* "talent" to many regions of the country. At present in the village itself live 29 veteran actors and actresses, aged 50-86. The Nguyen Xa *cheo* troupe has performed in many places at home and has toured such foreign countries as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, where it won praise from large audiences. Artistes from Nguyen Xa are coaching many *cheo* troupes in the country.

A large repertoire of ancient dances are preserved at Nguyen Xa: lantern dance, flag dance, rice-pounding dance, "old drunk's" dance as well as many *cheo* arias. However it is not easy to provide proper training to the young generation. The veterans feel that time is pressing while ancient songs and dances are not easy to learn. They would say to the young: "We'll soon depart from this world... Who will teach you? Make haste." Some like to evoke the image of the sun trying to shed its last rays as dusk approaches. Old women singers reminisce about the time when they were invited to Hue, the imperial capital, to perform. The Nguyen Xa *tuong* opera troupe was also once in the heyday of its glory.

Today general attention is focused on the Nguyen Xa water-puppet troupe. According to village elders water-puppetry in Nguyen Xa dates back 12 generations to the days under the Le dynasty. Along the centuries water-puppetry has entertained people in many Vietnamese villages on festive occasions. The art has survived to this day and since 1984 many troupes have toured foreign countries. They included many puppeteers from Nguyen Xa. The craft of making fireworks has also a long tradition in Nguyen Xa. Many kinds of fireworks made by veteran craftsmen can make striking displays of light, noise and smoke which add to the glamour of the water-puppet stage.

After the merger of its water-puppet troupe and *cheo* opera company, Nguyen Xa has a mixed group

of 30 artistes whose water-puppet repertoire alone comprises 30 numbers including some "key" items which are produced only on special occasions. For instance the item "Fox Chasing Duck" in which a fox swims under water to catch a duck, crosses the roof of a pavilion in the middle of the pond, climbs on top of an areca tree and again plunges into the pond. In the dance of the Four Sacred Animals (dragon, unicorn, tortoise, phoenix), at one point the dragon climbs onto the roof of the pavilion and belches fire before rejoining its dance partners in the pond which serves as a stage for the show.

A bamboo fish trap.

Nguyen Xa puppet shows are now the joint endeavour of experts in several fields: the plastic arts (wood carving in particular) decor, music, and stage direction. The accompanying orchestra is mainly composed of percussion instruments: drums and gongs of various sizes and pitches, castanets, wood blocks...

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Because of the shortage of cropland, Nguyen Xa villagers tend to concentrate on art handicrafts and small-scale industry. The village is supplied with electricity, and its lanes are macadamized. Nguyen Xa cuisine is well known for the superior quality of its *gio* and *cha* made of pounded pork, boiled or fried, and its pastry made of rice, sesame, groundnuts. In the old days, Nguyen Xa cakes were presented to the royal Court as tribute.

Nguyen Xa is well known for its tradition of learning and hospitality. Villagers often entertain their guests with singing sessions at which old traditional songs are performed. They have a firm tradition of solidarity, too. Those who have gone away to make a living frequently return home and make financial contributions to the village. They would give their fellow-villagers tips about how to make and sell handicraft goods. In short, Nguyen Xa has been praised for its traditional cultural traditions, a feature which characterizes many villages in Vietnam.

LY KHAC CUNG

SOUTHEAST ASIAN...

(Continued from page 2)

Practical suggestions on strengthening relations among the press in the region such as exchanges of professional experience, cooperation in training journalists, exchanges of publications and documents, cooperation among news agencies in order to do away with the existing situation in which the countries in the region can only know about one another through Western news agencies.

All participants agreed that although there has been no war among Southeast Asian countries in the past centuries, many protracted and fierce wars have taken place in the region. They have been caused by outside forces which have interfered in regional affairs, waged wars and provoked conflicts and tension.

The common aspiration of the peoples in the region as expressed by the participants is that they should live in peace, friendship and cooperation. Relationships among countries in Southeast Asia will certainly enter a new stage of development.

THANH TIN

RECOLLECTIONS OF A DRAMATIST

BUU TIEN

...We belonged to one of the old aristocratic families of Hue in the days of the Nguyen dynasty. My grandfather was a marquis and my great-grandfather, a duke, the Duke of Kien Phong. In the reign of Thanh Thai my grandfather was Vice Minister of Rites (Thi Lang Bo Le). Life was flowing smoothly in his brick house on the bank of the Perfume River.

One autumn evening, a trusted man of the King came to see the Thi Lang. "His Majesty," he said, "has expressed the desire to take your two elder daughters into his harem!" The Thi Lang was all the more shocked that there had been persistent rumours about the declining mental health of the King. According to the royal family tree, his daughters ranked as aunts of the King, and it would be immoral for him and his daughters to obey the desire of that "mad man". He found a pretext for refusal. "Alas," he told the emissary, "my daughters are already engaged to be married." After the envoy had left, a family meeting was held. As a result, two formal marriages were soon celebrated within the space of two months, in disregard of custom, which frowned on giving away two daughters in the same year.

Three months after this incident, one day, Thanh Thai harshly reproached the Thi Lang with "lack of zeal" in his work, and before the "one hundred Court dignitaries", had him given a beating by his guards. That a grandnephew should have corporal punishment inflicted on his granduncle, and in such a disgraceful way, was the limit! The Thi Lang asked to retire from office. He was then 48 years old.

Three days after his retirement, royal militiamen came to his home at night, and smashed all valuables they laid their hands on: French crystal chandeliers, mother-of-pearl-inlaid sofas, sandal-wood cupboards, Limoges porcelain, Chinese Ming and Song ceramics, teck-wood furniture, artificial ornamental plants with jade leaves and gold branches...

The Thi Lang silently bore his misfortunes. One year later, Thanh Thai's scheme of rebellion against the French Protectorate was denounced by a traitor mandarin, Truong Nhu Cuong. One of the charges levelled against the King gave the Thi Lang food for thought! The King had turned his harem into a regiment of women-soldiers who practised daily combat drills. All kinds of rumours spread like wildfire all over Hue city: The King was kept in a secret place... the King refused to sign a letter prepared by the French Governor and to swear loyalty to the French Government... the King was deposed... the King would soon be deported...

The Thi Lang now understood everything. Putting on his ceremonial gown, he burnt incense and joss-sticks, took off his head-dress, and letting his long hair fall on his shoulders, knelt down on the bare ground, made kowtows in the direction of the Royal Palace, beating his chest and weeping bitterly. Sobbing, he recited these verses:

"Oh! You Great King! so valiant and so beloved!
"You feigned madness in order better to hide your scheme!
"And I was such a fool not to have guessed your secret!
"The beating of that day I fully deserved!"

Then he shut himself in his room and fasted for a whole week.

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His eldest son, my father, got his licentiate degree (Cu nhan) at the triennial examination in 1918. The custom was that a licentiate of princely stock would have the same mandarinal rank as a commoner doctor (Tien si dung). However, the young scholar did not please the Court and saw his rights ignored.

That was in the reign of Khai Dinh. The King had the reputation of a gambler and a debauchee. (The people had nicknamed him the Mangy Prince on account of his persistent skin disease, and mostly for his despicable character.) Being up to his ears in gambling debts, he exacted bribes from the mandarins he promoted. He himself super-

vised mandarin promotions from the third level (district head — tri huyen or tri phu) upwards.

Having been repeatedly refused the office of district head, my father asked to be demoted three ranks and to be appointed to a subordinate post in the province. He was to reach the rank due to him at the start only twenty years later when several of his classmates were already ministers. He did his work perfunctorily, played cards, and was a passionate reader. His favourite book was Pu Sung Ling's famous "Collection of Ghost Stories" (Lieu trai chi di), which he knew by heart. He liked to recite these verses of his own composition:

Much more than I do men,
I love ghosts,
Yet, it is possible to love men,
Once they have become ghosts!

I was the third son of that junior mandarin, impecunious and bitter. Since early childhood, I inherited from my grandfather a sense of the tragic, and from my father that of honour. Also from a very young age, I had a liking for the stage. My grandfather unwittingly initiated me to the drama by often taking me along with him to the theatre. As a small child, I acted various parts of classical theatre in the small yard in front of the paternal cottage. With a crown of plaited leaves on my head, a rope wound around my waist, and brandishing a bamboo sword, I would shout and fight all alone. In my days in secondary school, I acted in plays of the spoken theatre on festive occasions. I understood the vanity of Molière's Mr. Jourdain who aspired to the title of "Mamamouchi" (Hadn't that same vanity tormented my father?) Likewise, I felt the tragic greatness of these words "Let him die!" spoken by Corneille's Old Horace (Hadn't that same nobility of feeling caused my grandfather to suffer so much?). Many a time, I scaled the walls of the boarding school to go to performances of *tuong* (classical opera) and *cai luong* (renovated opera). As modern spoken theatre was not then part of traditional Vietnamese literature, I turned to foreign dramatic authors and read their works passionately. I laughed with Molière, wept with Racine, smiled with Marivaux, indulged in philosophical thinking with Shakespeare, Ibsen and Shaw, felt love with Hugo and Schiller, hatred with Dostoievski and Gorki, hope with Chekov... I began writing stories, some of which were published in *Van Hoc Tap Chi*, a literary review of the time. But especially plays, of which none was ever performed.

That was how I spent my twelve years at school, in modest financial conditions. After graduation, in 1940, I went in search of a job.

A friend, who had a little estate in the countryside, proposed that I joined him in starting a tailor's shop in Hue. Due to his other occupations, he could devote to the shop only three or four days a week... Another friend, director of a private school, asked me to teach there, promising to make me work no more than 20 hours a week. I accepted both offers. As a teacher, I would be in close contact with the school youth whom I loved, devoting, in principle, the remaining part of the week to running the tailor's shop in the absence of my associate. Unfortunately, I spent most of my time reading instead of seriously doing business. Our amateurishness led the undertaking to bankruptcy less than two years later.

One summer afternoon, during a visit to my mother's village near Quang Tri city, I was attracted by the sight of a swarm of ducks swimming in a small canal, crossing a large stretch of rice-fields from which there arose sweet singing by women harvesters. I got to know an old peasant, full of vigour and energy, who owned some incubator equipment consisting of about ten big bamboo baskets, the size of wine casks, two piles of cotton towels, a few bins full of paddy husk, and two big cast-iron cauldrons resting on clay stoves. With these rudimentary implements and thanks to his knowhow, the man was able to deliver to local duck breeders several thousand little ducks twice a year.

One of my friends, who ran a private school in Quang Tri town, offered me a teaching job. By that time the Japanese had occupied Hue. I decided to leave the city and settle in the countryside. I bought the incubator from the peasant, and made him manager of my small business. My time was divided between my teaching job in town and my readings in my rural retreat. I read *The Three Kingdoms, History of the Eastern Chou, Man's Fate, Darkness at Noon, The Counterfeiters, The Prince*... But politics, I must confess, did not interest me. So many lies and so much trickery have accompanied it at all times. My peaceful mind was turned to more serene works: Buddha's Words, the Bible, the Koran... The local peasants, who did not know exactly what my occupations were, nicknamed me "Me Tu Vit", literally "His Excellency the Duck-Raising Bachelor of Arts."

The Japanese coup on the night of 9 March 1945 knocked down the French colonial administration throughout Indochina. All Frenchmen were put into concentration camps. Everywhere in the towns and district centres only sabre-carrying Japanese soldiers and officers were to be seen. Vietnam was

proclaimed an independent country, within the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The same king remained on the throne but with a new Cabinet, whose members no longer wore long beards and ceremonial gowns, nor went about in rickshaws drawn by soldiers. They were now clean-shaven gentlemen, wearing European-style clothes and driving in motor-cars. The new rulers no longer received orders from French administrators; they had only to hold "consultations" with Japanese advisers, without whose permission, however, nothing could be done.

As an eyewitness, I thought of the period as one marked by passage from classical theatre of Chinese inspiration to spoken theatre of Japanese inspiration with new actors, a new setting and new styles of acting.

While the US Air Force intensified its bombardment of Japanese-occupied Vietnamese cities, a terrible famine broke out, which was to take two million human lives in the northern part of the country alone. I, too, suffered. The private school where I was teaching had to close down, and the students scattered in the countryside. The ducks died in large numbers for lack of feed, and duck-breeders were ruined and half-starved. My small undertaking went bankrupt. Overnight, I found myself penniless and jobless.

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The August 1945 general uprising found me in Hue, where I had rejoined my family. The people, the overwhelming majority of whom were peasants, took over power under the leadership of the Viet Minh, in the villages, in the provinces, and in the capital city... The Revolution triumphed following mass demonstrations, meetings, political actions in the enemy's ranks... There was practically no bloodshed. The administrative apparatus at all levels fell like a ripe fruit into the hands of the insurrectionists.

Of course, long years of preparation and judicious leadership at the decisive moment were at the roots of this great event in our history. The revolutionary ardour of the masses was galvanized when the name of the supreme leader of the Revolution Ho Chi Minh, alias Nguyen Ai Quoc, became known. In our own circles, he was a legendary figure. Nguyen Ai Quoc's father, although only a modest mandarin at Court, had been a brilliant scholar who had educated the children of many great families in Hue. He recorded brilliant success at the doctorate examination before being appointed head of the district of Binh Khe. As a young man, Nguyen Ai Quoc studied at the Quoc Hoc College, then one of the rare establishments training future members of the intellectual elite. To the great surprise of everybody, the mandarin handed in his resignation, and the student left the school. It was rumoured afterwards that the father went to practise traditional medicine in Saigon, — and that the son secretly left the country. The son reappeared seven years later at the end of the First World War: a petition addressed to the Versailles Conference of Representatives of the Allied Powers, demanding independence for Vietnam, and signed Nguyen Ai Quoc, was a real bombshell at home and abroad. It was difficult to follow the itinerary of the revolutionary, but people heard vague rumours that he was travelling around the world, staying now in Paris, now in London, now in Berlin, now in Moscow, now in Canton...

The day the Viet Minh took over power in Hue, my father told me: "Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the revolution, must be none other than Nguyen Ai Quoc. That is all for the good. With him, we may be sure that everything will go well." Myself, who have remained to this day deeply impressed by the bloodless character of the August 1945 Revolution, I could not then help thinking of Moises who had led his congregation to the Promised Land.

It was in an atmosphere of exaltation that I attended the great popular meeting at which Bao Dai delivered his abdication speech. The King said in a broken voice that during his twenty years on the "Golden Throne" and the "Jade Dais", he had had to swallow many "bitter" things. And he added hesitatingly: "Today our wish is to be simple citizen of an independent country instead of King of an enslaved one!" A great ovation hailed these wise and generous words. But I smiled knowingly. In the royal family, he was only too well-known for his weakness of character. History was to show that he would soon cross over to and collaborate with the colonialist aggressors.

Without the benefit of any previous political training, I felt, at the time, that great difficulties were in store for the country. Immediately after the proclamation of independence, Vietnam received two unwelcome visitors: the Chinese army in the North, and the British army in the South. They came on behalf of the Allies, allegedly to disarm the Japanese fascists. In the South, right after their arrival, the British released

French soldiers from Japanese camps and even rearmed them, and unleashed them against the unarmed population. In the North, the Chiang Kai-shek troops brought in their vans Vietnamese Kuomintang elements who had taken refuge in China, attempted to put them in the saddle, and to stifle the young revolutionary power. The threat of a new war of aggression by the French colonialists loomed on the horizon.

The situation grew more and more confused. I adopted a wait-and-see attitude. I was not a communist, not even a member of the Viet Minh. Soon, I was also to be obsessed by a complex, when Bao Dai, who had become Supreme Adviser of the Revolutionary Government under his true name of Vinh Thuy, left his post and crossed over to the enemy: we were kin. Besides my books, my whole fortune consisted of a Ropps pipe, a silver-knobbed walking-stick, and my repaired incubator! I felt lonely and useless. One day, seated in my arm-chair and smoking my pipe, I got angry with myself: "Beware of your cowardice," I said to myself. "At the bottom of what you call your intellectual speculations, there lies simple and naked fear for your hide, fear that causes you to forget your sense of duty." I took a decision and broke my pipe on the floor of my room. With a knife, I pried the silver knob loose from my walking-stick, and threw it into the waste-paper basket.

At the first shots exchanged with the French in Hue during that night of 19 December 1946, I found myself in the ranks of the people's army. We were having our baptism of fire, my comrades as soldiers, and I as reporter of an army newspaper. Bullets whizzed past my ears, shell explosions shook the ground, flashes streaked the sky over my head... My heart had told me the truth. I felt my whole body trembling and my knees knocking against each other. However, little by little, I felt reassured, and leaning on my knobless stick, I made big strides in order not to be left behind by my squad. My comrades were much calmer. They talked of various things, of their sweethearts, of the beautiful women they knew.

We had just crossed the Clemenceau bridge, the present Trang Tien bridge, which spans the Perfume River. From a half-opened window on the first floor of the Morin and Brothers department store, shots were fired at us but the snipers were silenced when we returned the fire.

I had tripped and fallen, fortunately for me; an enemy bullet hit my neighbour on his forehead. He was Buu Chuong, son of a teacher with a reputation as an excellent horticulturist. I knew him, because we were kin. He was dying, and one of us closed his eyelids. This comrade I knew, too. He was Ton That Hoang, a member of the royal family and son of a high-ranking official. Half an hour later came his turn to be killed. Among the young Hue people who fell on the field of honour during that historic night, there were members of princely families as well as of the royal family. Anyhow, not all of us were Vinh Thuy who deserted their compatriots.

On returning to base after the attack, I murmured to myself the poem "The Heart of Hialman" by Lecomte de Lisle:

. . . . . .

Among so many happy and robust boys,
Who, this morning, were laughing and singing loudly,
Like blackbirds in the thick of the bushes...

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French reinforcements arrived and this made it possible for the occupiers to regain the initiative, after 20 days and 20 nights of encirclement by the people's forces. We received orders to pull out of the city, to scatter in the countryside and wage a guerilla war together with the village self-defence militias. A strategy of protracted resistance was practised. In any event, optimism prevailed. Witness this popular song:

The struggle is to last, it is to last a long time!
Let us plant bamboos, they will grow tall,
We'll cut sticks from them with which to haft our pikes,
They are our weapons to fight the enemy with...

Driven by my vocation for the stage, I joined an art ensemble of the army in the Fourth War Zone. Our troupe toured the three provinces of the free zone — Thanh Hoa, Nghe An and Ha Tinh, the last two now merged into Nghe Tinh. We performed for soldiers and villagers, singing the heroism of the people and their army, castigating traitors, and encouraging them to repent, exposing the enemy's weaknesses behind his apparent strength. Our theatre at the time conducted pure and simple propaganda. The plots of our plays were often childishly simple and our repertoire very poor. A few items:

A French soldier, during a mopping-up operation, tries to find a woman. A young woman peasant makes eyes at him, and he follows

her to her home, singing the French national anthem! (Every French character appearing on the scene invariably sang the Marseillaise!) He falls into trap and finally finds out that the beauty is a *du kich* (guerilla) disguised as a woman.

A puppet soldier carrying a hen and a duck in the huge pockets of his combat gear (real clucking ones!) and holding others in his hands, manages to swallow chunks of bananas the while.

A traitor is about to denounce a resistance group operating in his village. Anticipating a big reward from the French, he loudly sings: "I like nothing more than a lot of cash," and gets drunk. The door opens. Two guerillas seize him and bind him hand and foot. His own wife appears, and gives him a lesson on patriotism. He repents and swears loyalty to the Resistance.

Each performance consisted of two or three one-act plays of this kind, and two interludes: songs, prestidigitation tricks, mimes or recitals of poetry. I was almost always assigned the roles of French characters because of some of my facial features, and also of my hoarse voice which allowed me to speak French with a convincing accent. One special reason was the stick which I had kept with me, an inevitable accessory of an authentic Frenchman! Just imagine a Frenchman without his walking-stick. To deal with the shortage of make-up materials, many ideas were contributed: rouge was made with brick pounded into fine powder, white with chalk treated in the same way, and black with kitchen soot scraped off the bottoms of cooking-pots. These three fundamental colours in various combinations could help depict all kinds of characters on stage.

How to light the scene? We used two big bamboo torches, usually two long poles each with a rag wrapped at one end and soaked with groundnuts oil. They were lit only when the performance actually began and were put out during intermissions to be lit again afterwards, so as to spare oil and also as a precaution against enemy planes. Two strongly-built young villagers standing on either side of the stage would brandish these enormous torches, and unflinchingly hold them at arm's length for the whole duration of the spectacle. On some rare occasions, mantle-lamps were available. And young members in the troupe would exclaim ecstatically: "Just as in Hanoi!", that Hanoi they had never seen... and which some of them alas! would never see!

What about the setting? Every play was performed in a neutral setting: a piece of cloth as back-drop, two above, and four on the sides, and the curtain. The strict minimum! Sometimes, spectators on either side of the stage would protest, complaining that they couldn't see the performance from the side very well. All right! The strings that kept the pieces of cloth in place were cut and everybody was satisfied. Sometimes the play was acted in a natural setting, the stage being set on a hill-side, with mountain silhouettes as back-drop and a full moon in a clear sky.

As for the actors' costumes, the problem was fairly easy to solve. All characters in the cast — whatever the play — wore the clothes the actors and actresses wore in their everyday activities (brown or violet shirt and trousers), with a few accessories added: epaulets and caps made of coloured paper for colonialist officers. All colonialists being usually thought of as being pot-bellied, the actor playing one would wind a piece of cloth around his waist before putting on his shirt so as to create an appearance of corpulence... For the ghosts (spirits of the dead appeared sometimes, either to chastise traitors, or encourage resisters in their dreams), we would borrow black robes from old villagers and paste on them, according to the mandarinal rank of those ghosts emerging from the heroic past, figures of dragon, phoenix, or peacock, also made of coloured paper.

In those heroic or comic plays, I conscientiously played all the roles assigned to me. I also conscientiously wrote plays — one-act, then two-act ones. Almost all my plays were performed by our troupe before being published in the Resistance Literature and Art Review of the Fouth War Zone. I was thus actor, author, and director at the same time. Among the plays I wrote at the time, two were particularly well received: the comedy "He was afraid lest the sky would fall on his head" (1948), making fun of a coward who shirks all tasks the resistance assigned to him, and the tragedy "There on High" (1949) exalting the heroism of a former Court minister, descendant of a princely family in Hue, who joined the ranks of the Resistance at the age of 60. Without any previous training in any drama school whatsoever, I was nonetheless entrusted with the task of training dramatists in crash courses.

Our troupe toured the province of Binh Tri Thien which was then frequently raided by French troops. In the maquis as in the villages, we were warmly received by enthusiastic lovers of the theatre. Our performances were applauded ecstatically, even as enemy soldiers were committing the most atrocious crimes in the region in those days. I felt myself to be useful. Those were unforgettable days.

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CHRONOLOGY • CHRONOLOGY

(15 June — 14 July)

JUNE

15. *Moscow*: Signing of an agreement on cooperation between the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries for 1988 — 1989.

15-20. SRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach visits Thailand at the invitation of his Thai counterpart.

16. *Hanoi*. The Vietnam National Oil and Gas Company (PETROVIETNAM) signs a contract on oil and gas exploration and exploitation with SHELL Exploration of Holland and PETROFINA of Belgium (See Panorama in this issue).

19-22. An economic delegation of Yugoslavia headed by Minister Nevenca Neralic Milivojevic, member of the Federal Executive Council and head of the Yugoslav section of the Vietnam — Yugoslavia Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation visits Vietnam and attends the fifth session of the commission. Minutes on trade agreement for 1988 — 1990 and a protocol on goods exchanges for 1988 are signed by the two sides. On this occasion the Yugoslav Government decides to grant an emergency aid of 150 million dinars for 1988 to people in calamity-stricken areas in Vietnam.

20. *Hanoi*: Signing of minutes on cooperation between Vietnam and India in publishing each other's literary works for 1988 — 1989.

— *Prague*: Ending of the 22nd session of the Czechoslavia — Vietnam Sub-committee for Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Protocols on cooperation in such fields as electrical technology, machine-building, geology, health care, light industry and agriculture are signed on this occasion.

20-22. A Party and State delegation of Vietnam headed by Nguyen Huu Tho, Vice-President of the State Council, attends the international meeting for the establishment of nuclear-free zones held in Berlin.

20-23. A delegation of the Japan — Vietnam Friendship Parliamentary League (JVFPL) headed by its President Y.Sakurauchi, pays a friendship visit to Vietnam.

27 June — 6 July: A Vietnamese military delegation headed by Lieutenent General Doan Khue, Chief of General Staff, pays an official friendship visit to the Republic of Indonesia.

27. *Nhan Dan daily*: FAO approves a plan for food relief supplies worth 9,121,800 US dollars to areas struck by natural calamities in Vietnam.

— The Command of the Vietnamese Volunteer Forces and the Group of Vietnamese Military Experts leave Kampuchea for home.

— Signing in Berlin of an agreement on GDR aid to Vietnam worth 42 million *marks* for 1988. According to this argeement in 1988 the GDR will continue to help Vietnam in personnel training, health care and will supply Vietnam with consumer goods and medicines.

30-June — 4 July: Claude Martin, head of the Asia — Oceania Department of the French Foreign Ministry, visits Vietnam.

JULY

2. The SRV Council of Ministers issues regulations on foreign flights crossing the air space of the SRV.

— *Hanoi*: Signing of an agreement on Sweden's emergency aid worth 25 million *kroner* to Vietnam.

5. The Oil Service Company (OSC) of the Vung Tau — Con Dao special zone of Vietnam and the Union of Cooperative "AK Slusovice" (AKS) of Czechoslovakia obtain permission from the Vietnamese Ministry for External Economic Relations to establish a joint tourist enterprise to be named OTAS. This is the sixth licence given by this Ministry to joint enterprises in this special zone since the promulgation of the Law on Foreign Investment in Vietnam.

5-7. A Vietnamese delegation led by Vo Van Kiet, Political Bureau member of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and first Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, attends the 44th session of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) in Prague. The session adopts a programme for the coordination of national economies for 1991-1995, and a programme for multilateral cooperation with Vietnam, Cuba and Mongolia.

7-8. Mustafa Safarini, special envoy of the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat, visits Vietnam.

8-11. A delegation of the People's National Committee for Communications and Sea Transport of the Socialist People's Libya Arab Jamahirihya led by Minister Imbarak. A.Shamakh, Secretary of the Committee, visits Vietnam.

9. President of the SRV State Council, Vo Chi Cong signs a decree promulgating the "Law on Nationality" and the "Law on Penal Procedure" adopted by the SRV National Assembly on 28 June 1988.

10. *Hanoi*: Closing of the 1988 national junior table-tennis tournament under the sponshorship of the journal "Thieu Nien Tien Phong" (Young Pioneer). 176 young players have taken part in the competition. The Ho Chi Minh City team won most prizes.

11. *Phnom Penh*: SRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach attends an extraordinary conference of foreign ministers of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

14-15. *Hanoi*: Vietnamese and American experts discuss the resettlement in America of former collaborators of the Saigon regime recently released from reeducation camps.

Kampuchea Today

- *Timber for export.*
- *Harvest in Kompong Speu.*
- *At the Air Defence Non-Commissioned Officers' Training School.*

Photos: VU HUYEN